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AUTHOR Cox, J. Lamarr; Spivey, Rita
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ABSTRACT

This report describes methodology and results of a study to determine the nature and extent of the high school dropout problem in the Appalachian region and to explore characteristics of existing programs dealing with dropout problems in the region. Data aggregation complicated by lack of standardization in reporting numbers of dropouts and dropout rates prompted the alternate approach of computing a "leavers" rate--the difference between number of pupils enrolled at the beginning of grade 7 in 1977-78 and the numbers completing grade 12 in 1983-84. Dropout rates for 39% of Appalachian counties were found to be more than 1.5 times the national average. Low economic status was found for 60% of dropouts; poor academic achievement was the main reason for dropping out. No significant differences were found between rural and urban dropouts. Public school programs for dropout problems were found in 241 school districts and 11 Local Development Districts. Program descriptions identified seven types of remediation: counseling, alternative, attitudinal, work-related programs, tutorials, parental involvement, and attendance incentives. Detailed descriptions are provided of nine dropout prevention projects and five technical assistance programs funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission. A table compares dropout rates by state as computed by various methods. (LFL)

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High School Dropout in Appalachia:

Problems and Palliatives

by

J. Lamarr Cox, Research Triangle Institute
P. O. Box 12194, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709

Rita Spivey, Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20235

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High School Dropout in Appalachia:
Problems and Palliatives

A. Introduction

Appalachia is a region of contradictions. Even the adjectives so often used to describe it are paradoxical: rich yet poor; exploited yet underdeveloped; scarred yet beautiful. Appalachia's socioeconomic evolution led to its national emergence as a "pocket of poverty" in the richest nation in the world and, ultimately to an experiment in government called the Appalachian Regional Development Program and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

The Appalachian Region, as defined by the Appalachian Regional Development Act (ARDA) includes all of West Virginia and parts of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. It incorporates 397 counties in the 13 states, covers a total of 195,000 square miles and has a current population of over 20 million.

Appalachia is a land rich in natural resources. Eight of the 13 states have coal deposits estimated at 113.3 trillion short tons. Natural gas and deposits of many other minerals are among its other natural resources. Much of the Region is heavily forested; Appalachian hardwoods are famous throughout the country. Water is generally abundant. Verdant in summer, the Region's higher altitudes accumulate enough snow in winter to attract year-round tourism. Few other regions in the country, if any, are so richly endowed.

For many years, Appalachia despite its rich natural resources has suffered from chronic economic and social distresses: isolation; a lack of transportation to counteract its inaccessibility; boom-and-bust cycles of prosperity and poverty; unemployment; inadequate public facilities; a lack of social services. The Commission was established by Congress in 1965 as both an economic and social development agency to help build a better economy and a better quality of life for Appalachia and its inhabitants.

The Commission is unique in American government. It is neither federal nor is it state. Instead, it is a federal-state partnership comprised of the Governors of the 13 states that comprise Appalachia and a Federal Cochairman appointed by the President.

The Commission has emphasized educational opportunity from its inception and is proud of its commitments (500 million dollars in grants) to improve education for the Region. On the occasion of its 20th Anniversary in March, 1985, the Commission acklowledged that the continuing problem of school dropouts in Appalachia has serious implications for the social and economic development of the Region and it is a matter of strategic economic importance to reduce the dropout rate in the Region. The Commission moved swiftly to address the problem at various levels of awareness and involvement. The first of these activities was to contract with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to conduct a study to determine the nature and extent of the dropout problem.

B. Determining the Dimensions of the Problem

The objectives of the RTI study were to:

- o Determine the nature and extent of the high school dropout problem in the Appalachian Region.
- o Gain insights into the nature and extent of programs to address the dropout problem in Appalachia.
- o Determine what exemplary program activities might be recommended.

For purposes of this paper, we will restrict our comments to an overview of our findings relative to the first two of these objectives.

One of the first steps that we took to try to determine the high school dropout rate in the Appalachian Region was to contact State-level personnel in the 13 states and ask for data and information such as annual numbers of dropouts, dropout rates as usually reported by each State, and State dropout definitions and attendance requirements. Aggregating data across states was complicated by the fact that states used different formats for reporting both numbers of dropouts and dropout rates. For example, one state reported the total number of dropouts for a given school year for grades 7-9 and for grades 10-12; another state reported for grades 9-12, while another reported for grades K-12. Some states included special population pupils in these counts; some states did not. Thus, aggregating data across states was no trivial matter. States also used widely differing approaches to reporting dropout rates. The predominant method (used by about half of the states) was to report an annual

dropout rate for each county or school district by dividing the year's total dropouts, in the grades reported, by the total enrollment in those grades. Since data were available from most of the states that we could use for computing the dropout rate in this fashion for the Appalachian counties in the states, we used this as one of several methods of reporting dropout rate. We used grades 7-12 (even though this did stretch our definition of high school dropout a bit) because of data availability and because we noted a quite high dropout rate in grades 7-9 in some states. The 1983-84 dropout rate reported in this manner is shown in Column 1 of Table A. What these data mean is that in 1983-84, 3.7 percent of the pupils in the Appalachian counties of Alabama (for example) who enrolled in grades 7-12 dropped out of school at some time during that year.

There are several problems with this method of computing dropout rate, with one of the major ones being the difficulty in making comparisons with National data (which we will discuss later). To get around some of these problems, we used the numbers of dropouts reported by the states to compute 1983-84 dropout as a percentage of 1983-84 grade 7 enrollment (Column 2 of Table A). What this means (again, for the Appalachian Counties of Alabama) is that 19.5 percent of the pupils who enroll in the 7th grade eventually will drop out of school if the dropout pattern and rate continue as they were in 1983-84. Besides being somewhat easier to conceptualize, this (as we will show later) provides data more readily comparable to national data. This also shows that, if one state or region reported a dropout rate of 3.7 percent and another reported a rate of 19.5 percent, the difference might be due to the method of reporting rather than to an actual difference in dropout patterns.

Unfortunately, we could not be completely satisfied with the accuracy of these data that were based on enrollment and dropout numbers provided to the states by individual school districts. According to many of the state-level and a number of school-district personnel whom we contacted, procedures for obtaining accurate counts of dropouts were suspect. Acquiring accurate counts requires the follow-up of pupils who leave school prior to graduation, to determine their educational status. If a pupil transfers out-of-state, locating him or her may be especially

Table 1

State Dropout Rates (Appalachian Counties Only)

	Reported 1983-84 dropouts as a percentage of grades 7-12 enrollment	Reported 1983-84 dropouts as a percentage of 1983-84 grade 7 enrollment	Estimated leavers as a percentage of 1978-79 grade 7 enrollment	1980 census data ages 18-24
AL	3.7	19.5	29.5	29.1
GA	5.8	30.2	37.2	35.4
KY	5.3	27.8	38.1	38.1
MD	1.9	11.2	16.7	22.5
MS	4.6	24.2	36.6	31.2
NC	5.2	28.7	24.8	29.2
NY	2.6	14.9	17.2	17.0
OH	1.8	9.6	18.8	26.2
PA	1.9	12.9	12.9	16.6
SC	3.2	17.2	30.5	28.7
TN	(5.3)*	(28.4)*	29.1	29.5
VA	3.5	18.5	30.1	38.1
WV	3.2	16.6	27.0	27.2
Total for Appalachian States	3.4	19.3	24.0	25.3
Total for USA				23.9

*These rates for Tennessee were computed by RTI based upon enrollment data provided by Tennessee.

demanding. School districts often reported a lack of resources necessary for a thorough job of this often time-consuming and expensive undertaking. Identifying "summer dropouts," that is, pupils who completed a grade level but simply failed to turn up the following year, was reported to be a particular problem. Also noted was that, with funding based on enrollment, there appeared to be a disincentive for school districts to report dropouts.

Because of such reasons, we undertook still another approach to looking at dropout rates that was independent of the numbers of dropouts reported by school districts. We computed what we called a "leavers" rate based solely on enrollment data. The number of leavers was defined as the difference between the number of pupils enrolled at the beginning of grade 7 six years ago and the number who completed grade 12 in 1983-84. To the extent that " transfers in" equal "transfers out" and the numbers of nonpromotions and early promotions are stable from year to year, the number of leavers should be basically identical to the number of dropouts. From this estimated number of leavers, we computed a leavers rate (Column 3 of Table A) that we thought should be reasonably identical to the dropout rate if all dropouts were reported. What this rate means (again, for the Appalachian counties of Alabama) is that for every 100 pupils who started out in the seventh grade back in 1978-79, only 70.5 pupils were enrolled in grade 12 six years later at the end of the 1983-84 school year. In other words, there was a net loss of 29.5 percent of the 7th grade population. As can be seen from Column 3, our leavers rate is somewhat higher than the dropout rate listed in Column 2. Since, according to census data, there have been no major population shifts into or out of Appalachia and other related factors appear reasonably stable, we think this computed leavers rate is a better estimate of dropout rate at the state or regional levels than rates computed from the reported numbers of dropouts.

The only other data set that permitted estimates of dropout at the county level was the 1980 census data (Column 4 of Table A). These data are based on the household census report of the proportion of 18-to-24-year-olds having completed three years or less of high school.

Even though there are some problems with using these as dropout data, they have the advantage of not being dependent on school district reported dropout counts, likely including individuals who completed school via GED testing, and not being affected by shifts between public and private schools. Thus, they may be the more accurate estimator of dropout rate at the county level. And, as may be noted, in the Table, they do permit comparisons across regions and with the nation as a whole.

Noting the high dropout rate, as compared with the national average, for many of Appalachian counties does not tell the whole story. Thirty-one percent of the Appalachian counties have a dropout rate of 1 1/2 to twice the national average and another 8 percent have a rate of more than double the national average. This shows that much of Appalachia has a serious problem and that part of Appalachia has an appalling problem.

Another of our concerns related to the characteristics of dropouts. A few of the states reported the numbers of dropouts by such characteristics as race, sex, age, or reasons for dropping out. The findings, based on these quite limited data, were as follows. The dropout rate for Appalachian males was slightly higher than for females. The dropout rate was highest at the 9th and 10th grade levels (roughly, 50 percent of the total dropouts) and for pupils 16 and 17 years of age (about 65 percent of the dropouts). The economic status of the families of dropouts was below average for 56 percent of the dropouts, above average for about 4 percent, and about average for the remaining 40 percent. States reported the primary reason for dropping out (about 60 percent of the cases) to be poor academic achievement and related reasons. This could raise, of course, some questions as to what the move toward raising academic standards will do to the dropout rate. The only other major reason given for dropping out (about 14 percent of the cases) was financial reasons.

We also attempted to determine whether or not rural dropouts were different from urban dropouts. Our data showed no significant differences between the two.

To address the second objective of the study that we conducted for the Commission (determining the nature and extent of existing programs intended to address the dropout problem), we first contacted state-level personnel to find out what the states were doing. All 13 of the Appalachian states reported having at least one person at the state level with responsibility for assisting in addressing the dropout problem. The major activities at the state level were reported to consist of working with state-level task forces, disseminating dropout program information to local school districts, and sponsoring dropout prevention conferences. Many of the states also reported providing special funding to support local dropout reduction/remediation programs. Most of the states indicated, however, that the nature and extent of dropout reduction/remediation efforts remained primarily a local school district prerogative.

Our next activity, then was to contact all 1,033 school districts in Appalachia and ask them about any public school programs intended <u>primarily</u> to address the dropout problem. We had an excellent response from the school districts, and we identified 241 school districts that sponsored such programs. We also attempted, in our contacts with state-level personnel and subsequent contacts with the 69 Local Development Districts in Appalachia, to identify any programs sponsored by other than the public school system. Eleven programs, including 76 Appalachian counties, were reported. And, finally, we worked on a method for describing dropout reduction/remediation programs for reporting purposes once we located them.

One question that might be asked about these dropout reduction/remediation programs is the relationship between the existence of such programs and the dropout rate. Or, put another way, are the programs found in those counties where they are the most needed? The answer, unfortunately, is "not necessarily". As we noted earlier, 8 percent of the Appalachian counties have an extremely high dropout rate compared to the national average, and another 31 percent have a rate of 1 1/2 to twice the national average. However, only 44 percent of both of these groups of counties

reported having dropout reduction/remediation programs. On the other hand, of the counties with a dropout rate above the average up to 1 1/2 times the average, 55 percent reported having dropout reduction/remediation programs. And of the counties with the lowest dropout rates (equal to or less than the national average), 73 percent reported having such programs. So what we have is a situation where those counties with a relatively low dropout rate are almost twice as likely to have a dropout reduction/remediation program as are the counties with very high dropout rates. No matter how we interpret this, one clear conclusion would appear to be that more needs to be done in some of these high incidence counties.

From the program description information that we collected, we identified seven clusters of dropout reduction/remediation activities that appeared to include all of the reported program activities. We noted that most of the programs reported more than one of these activities as being a program emphasis. Twenty-five percent of the reported activities could be categorized as counseling/advising related activities. This included one-to-one or small group activities intended to facilitate the pupil's development of self-awareness, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and understanding of available options and the possible consequences of school and life decisions. Another 22 percent of the activities were related to alternative curriculum or classes, either in the regular school or at separate facilities, and either as a part of the regular school day or with a different time schedule. Nineteen percent of the activities were work related and included prevocational, vocational, and on-the-job training. Fourteen percent of the activities were tutorial and included remedial and supplementary assistance in individual or small-group settings.

Eight percent of the activities were attitudinal or self-awareness related and included improving rapport between pupils, parents, teachers, and administrators; addressing disciplinary problems and pupil suspension, and activities such as having prominent citizens speak to pupils regarding the importance of completing school. Six percent of the activities were related to parental involvement. This included parent conferences, home visits, parent study groups, parent counseling, and using parents as tutors or providers of support services. Five percent of the activities

were attendance incentive activities such as attendance enforcement, negative reinforcement for poor attendance, and positive reinforcement for good attendance.

The great majority of the programs were sponsored by the public school systems with other community organizations and agencies, including local businesses, often called upon for assistance, particularly with work-related and attendance incentive activities. Funding typically was state and local funding; however, some federal funding, particularly JTPA, Chapter I, and Chapter 2 funds, were used.

Of note is that our contacts with state and local school district personnel revealed an exceptional understanding of and concern about the severity of the dropout problem. Contacted personnel seemed anxious to do something about the problem, even though they often expressed uncertainty as to the best way to proceed.

The major conclusion of the RTI study were that the best available data indicate that high school dropout is a serious problem in Appalachia, particularly in the Central and Southern regions, with a rate in some of the counties that is more than double the national average. The states and local school districts recognize that a problem exists and are taking steps to moderate the problem. However, high school dropout is a complex problem for which there appears to be no simple solution. The public school systems need help in addressing the problem. In our contacts with the school districts, two major needs were expressed in this regard. School district personnel said that they needed information about:

-- program activities appropriate for implementation with minimal resources, and
-- program activities that have been appropriately evaluated and found to be effective.

Hopefully, the follow-up activities being conducted by the Commission will help to fill some of these expressed needs.

C. Further Activities to Address the Problem

A number of additional activities were undertaken by the Commission to address the dropout problem in Appalachia. these included:

- o A regional conference on dropout prevention for some 200 school and community leaders was held in Atlanta, Georgia.
- o Funds were allocated to the Appalachian Foundation for dropout prevention/remediation programs with a requirement that private sector support be an integral part of each project.
- o Technical assistance efforts were initiated to make dropout expertise available to Appalachian communities.
- o Commission policies were liberalized to give Governors greater flexibility in using ARC funds for dropout programs.

These efforts were diverse and to date, the Commission has committed nearly $2.2 million for dropout prevention efforts in the Region including forty-six projects and five technical assistance efforts. These projects generally became operational during the August, 1985 - January, 1986 time period, therefore having been operational less than a year. The cost of individual project grants ranges from $2,500 to $47,000. Technical assistance grants range from $9,000 to $161,000. An effort was made to fund projects of a reasonable cost so that continuation after the period of Commission support was likely.

Guidelines for grants are flexible. State or local school systems and other public or private nonprofit organizations may apply. Funds are not approved for sectarian religious purposes. Examples of eligible activities include but are not limited to special tutoring or counseling; work-related training; alternative classes; parent involvement; state or regional program facilitation or technical assistance; or combinations of such activities. Innovative and nontraditional approaches to the design or delivery of these or similar activities are encouraged. Programs must include strong community involvement (such as schools, parents, businesses and civic organizations) and appropriate linkages to public and private agencies (such as those for job counselling, social and health services). Activities for which support is reuqested must be geographically limited to Appalachia, and must address middle, junior or senior high school potential dropouts, or recent dropout populations. Priority is given to program proposal which include significant financial participation by the private business sector.

Of the forty-six projects, nearly one-half (20) are located in Kentucky. Both Tennessee and West Virginia have four projects, while Alabama and Mississippi have three each. Two projects are being funded in Georgia, two in Virginia, one in Maryland, one in Pennsylvania, and one in North Carolina. At the present time no Commission assistance is being provided in New York or South Carolina.

Categorizing the projects by the approaches listed in the RTI study; tutorial activities, alternative curriculum or classes, work-related activities, counseling/advising, attitudinal/self-awareness activities, attendance incentive activities, and parental involvement, it is seen that in eleven projects the major component is an alternative class or curriculum and in nine projects, the emphasis is counseling. Three projects are primarily tutorial, while one each focus on work related activities, and parental involvement. This leaves twenty projects which while possessing to a degree some or even all of the above characteristics are best identified as public awareness - community and business involvement projects.

These are projects where the school districts have felt the need to include the entire community in their efforts to reduce the dropout rate in their schools. While some of the districts had dropout prevention activities occuring they recognized the importance of increasing public awareness of the problem and the need for total community support to achieve results. Examples of these types of projects can be found in Georgia and Kentucky.

In Georgia, a program started by the Dalton City and Whitfield County Boards of Education and the DALWHICHCOM Foundation, an arm of the Dalton-Whitfield Chamber of Commerce is being expanded with Commission funds while a similar program in neighboring Chatsworth City, Murray County is being initiated. This area of Georgia is the carpet capital of the world. Both counties are fairly affluent, not ones of low socioeconomic status, yet 1980 census data and local school district files indicated that typically, 49% of Murray County and 48% of Whitfield County students would not graduate from high school.

School districts in both counties found that their dropout rates were directly related to local industry's practice of hiring the young school dropout. There are approximately 350 carpet mills and related carpet operations that employ over 40,000 people within a 30 mile radius of Dalton. These carpet-related jobs, for the most part, do not require highly

skilled labor. Traditionally school dropouts could usually obtain full-time employment. Once employment began, these dropouts seldom returned to school. Through their hiring practices, industry was disregarding the long term welfare of the teenager by de-emphasizing his/her educational needs.

When the dropout figure for Whitfield County was presented to the community in the early 80's the first reaction of many citizens was "it simply is not true - the statistics are not accurate". One businessman (the president of a local carpet company) was appalled and took it upon himself to do something about the dropout problem. When he presented the statistics to the Dalton-Whitfield Chamber of Commerce, they became interested in attacking the problem because of the impact a near 50 percent dropout rate could have on the community. It was calculated that dropouts cost Whitfield County a minimum of $430,000 in lost state revenues during the 1982-83 school year.

The DALWHICHCOM Foundation adopted the problem of dropouts as their number one priority for the 1984-85 school year in both the county school systems: Dalton City and Whitfield County. The plan was to expose the extent and impact of the dropout problem to every member in the community, to parents, to business, to social and religious organizations - to the people who had resources to cause things to happen. Out of that effort came a program that is called Education Is E$$ential. Its overall objective is to identify potential dropouts at the earliest stage possible and to develop a specific plan of action to intervene. Volunteers from the community have been assigned to the school counselors to assist in interacting with each child and the child's parents. Efforts are being made to involve all students in extracurricular activities. The most unique feature of the program is the partnership that has been established between the schools and businesses, 147 of which in the Dalton-Whitfield area have agreed to a five-point plan under which they will:

- encourage job applicants under the age of 19 to complete their high school education before seeking a position with their companies

- hire high school students on a part-time basis only and establish contact with the school counselor to ensure that attendance and grades are maintained

- promote education through publicizing and communicating information to employees even utilizing payroll stuffers

- o give special recognition to employees who achieve their GED certificate, and to the children of employees upon their graduation from high school

- o participate in a continuing program to encourage students to maximize their potential by completing their education.

Though the program has been operational less than 2 complete years, results have been impressive, attendance has increased, the dropout rate has decreased by approximately 8% and, the enrollment in adult basic education has increased by 33.5%.

The Murray County project "Stay-in-School" which began in August of 1985, is very similar to the Dalton-Whitfield project. It, too, is co-sponsored by a chamber of commerce and relies a great deal on private sector involvement. Thirty local industry personnel serve as the "Stay-in-School" Task Force Visitation Team. Working in pairs, they have received signed commitments from 90% of all industries in the county to support the school district's program. While the program has not been operational, a whole year improvement in attendance has been noted. Last year at mid-semester only 69 students had perfect attendance. This year it was 307 students.

At an almost exact opposite economically to the Georgia projects is the Appalachian Dropout Prevention Outreach Program Team (Project ADOPT) in six distressed Eastern Kentucky counties (Clay, Jackson, Lee, Magoffin, McCreary, Wolfe). The dropout figures for these counties range from 47% to 65%. The percentage of the population below poverty level ranges from 33% to 42%. In December, 1985 when the national unemployment rate was 6.7% these counties had rates ranging from 13% to 20%. The school districts in these counties in cooperation with the Kentucky Department of Education are piloting a program that will demonstrate that dropout reduction can be accomplished through building strong local support for high school completion for all students.

Central to the demonstration's design is a two person specialist team. One team member provides direct services on an immediate basis for students of high risk for dropping out. This member's task is to keep students in school while a substitute support system is being built. The other member acts as a community development specialist whose task is to establish long range school/community support systems aimed at high risk students in grades 7-12. Examples of ADOPT activities are:

Adopt-A-School	Businesses are solicitated to support specific schools' dropout prevention efforts. The six counties in this project have little industry and few businesses. The type of business being solicited is generally small, such as the local grocery chain.
Adopt-A-Child	School teachers, senior citizens, Big Brothers and Sisters are being asked to provide special support for a student of high risk.
Adopt-A-Family	Stable families, church groups, civic clubs are being asked to work with less stable families to aid students to stay in school.
Adopt-A-Program	Civic clubs, chambers of commerce, churches, etc. are being enlisted to provide teen recreation, teen community, social and service opportunities for high risk students.
Adopt-A-Plan	Local, county, and the state government are being encouraged to plan and coordinate their resources to address dropout prevention in a cooperative and comprehensive manner.

Another approach is a tutorial program that has been established at the Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County, Kentucky. Census figures indicate that 45% of the 18-24 year olds in the county did not complete high school. According to 1984 Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) given to all 183 Kentucky school districts, Harlan County ranked 183rd. Pine Mountain Settlement School was founded in 1913. Uncle William Creech, who deeded the land to the school stated its purpose as "to be used for the education of children as long as the Constitution of the United States stands". Over the years the School like most settlement schools still in existence in Kentucky has provided supplemental instructional activities for children of the county's public schools.

Local school districts are cooperating with the Settlement School in this project by referring students and distributing flyers about it to students and parents. The program

operates after school for three hours, three evenings a week. Tutoring in reading and other subjects is provided by Settlement School staff and volunteers (often parents of students) they have recruited. The local school district has limited remedial programs for students and the program at the Settlement School away from the regular school setting where students may not be experiencing success, provides an opportunity for learning in a more relaxed setting. Parents (who often themselves are dropouts) are encouraged to participate in all activities.

A different approach to counseling, a "listeners" program, is being taken in Alleghany County, North Carolina. It is a rural, agriculturally based county of approximately 10,000 persons. The local school system consists of three elementary schools and one high school with a total enrollment in the school system of approximately 1,700. While the district has a Job Partnership Training Act (JTPA) funded dropout prevention program for high school students, they felt the need to reach students earlier. District records indicated that most of their dropouts began experiencing problems in the middle grades (5-8). The district has recruited ten retired educators to work with identified high-risk middle grade students. Working one-on-one, the "listeners" provide guidance and counseling, to the students. The students in return have a special friend not officially associated with the school with whom they can share their problems. "Listeners" receive a small stipend to cover transportation and lunch costs. Plans are in place to expand the program using community volunteers who will be trained in "listening" techniques.

The Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) in Pennsylvania is establishing the Special Teaching and Training Alternative for Youth project (STAY) to address the school dropout problem in the five-county CSIU region. This project is the first step in designing a comprehensive delivery system to serve the potential dropouts in all of the school districts in the CSIU region.

One component of the total program is a pilot alternative school program for 20 junior high school students (grades 7-8-9) in the Berwick Area School District. Whereas alternative programs generally focus on senior high school students, this program seeks to give middle school students the opportunity to experience success in school so they will be able and want to reenter the regular curriculum. Students selected for the program are two or more years behind grade level and have demonstrated such characteristics as high absenteeism, discipline problems, lack of success in the regular classroom and who have low scores in reading. The program emphasizes reading and math skills and will develop communication skills such as writing, speaking and spelling. Instruction is individualized

in a small group setting. Along with basic skills, computers and other motivational teaching devices are utilized. While reentry into the regular curriculum is a project goal, it is expected that the older students (16 & above) may be prepared for the GED test and/or entry into the labor market.

An attitudinal/self-awareness approach is being taken by the Overton County Tennessee School District. They had an alternative school in place but felt the need to provide a program for students who were not in immediate danger of dropping out of school but were high-risk students nonetheless. A class is being established at the high school to provide activities designed to be highly motivational, and which will enable the students to perceive the relationship between their areas of study and everyday living.

The two major components of the class are the Zig Zigler "I CAN" motivational training program and computers. The computers are to be used as motivators and also to present survival skills programs dealing with personal finance, consumerism, contemporary living and work/career skills. In a further effort to improve the student's self-concept, students are encouraged to become or remain active in extracurricular and club activities. A special "I CAN" club is planned for those students involved in the class. Other services students will receive are counseling to assist them in establishing personal goals. During this phase of class activities, information will be provided about the local State area vocational school and area colleges. Special tutoring including peer tutoring is a part of the program.

Students may remain in the class as little as two weeks or a year or longer dependent on their needs. While in the class, students will also be participating in their regular high school curriculum. The school district also views this class as a transition area for students reentering the regular high school program from the alternative school.

While in Whitfield and Murray Counties, Georgia students leave school for jobs, in too many Appalachian counties students leave school because there are no jobs. A good example is Owsley County. Owsley County is a small, rural county in southeastern Kentucky consisting of 197 square miles and 5,700 people. Booneville, the county seat, has a population of just 400. The county is an area of hills and hollows; paved but narrow roads with even many unpaved roads; small businesses with most folks "eking out a living" on small hillside farms. The county per capita income of $2,946 is reported as the fourth

lowest in the nation. Forty-eight percent of the population are below the poverty level and the unemployment rate hovers in the 20% - 25% range. Dropout rates for the 18-24 population are 49%. The school district starts classes in early August to ensure they will complete the state-mandated days of instruction as bad weather and roads close the schools an average of 35 days per year.

The Owsley County High School has a membership of 470 in grades 7-12. The curriculum is reflective of poor school financing (as there is an extremely low tax base in the county) and therefore has limited offerings which are designed to meet the state mandates for graduation and so are basically college preparatory. There's a little to motivate the average and below average students. There's little to enlist good attendance and remaining in school through graduation. There have been no jobs waiting when youth exit school.

Motivation for staying in school arrived in Owsley County last spring when DataCom, a computer firm, a new industry, located in a neighboring county 8 miles west of Booneville. This industry has the potential to employ 200 people. In order to be accepted for training at DataCom, an applicant must be able to type 42 words per minute on an electric typewriter with no more than 3 mistakes per page. As Martha Turner of Owsley County says "there is no way to describe what one-half or 100 of these jobs would mean to the County". With the prospect of employment, the Owsley County School District developed a comprehensive dropout prevention/remediation program with many components one of which is career preparation.

The major features of the Career preparation component are developing employability skills especially typing and helping students develop personal attributes and attitudes expected by most employers. Some Commission funds were used to purchase electric typewriters as the high school business education department had manual typewriters and only two electric typewriters. High school dropouts were recruited for a special typing class to be offered in the evening. It was hoped that twenty-five students would enroll. The response was such that two classes are scheduled. In addition, a special after-school typing class is conducted for interested students. The return of the young dropouts to the typing class has led to the establishment of adult basic education classes three evenings a week at the high school. It would appear that the work-related component of this dropout prevention/project remediation program is succeeding.

While most of the Commission funded projects have had a parental involvement component, the McDowell County, West Virginia program is the only one where it is the major thrust. McDowell County has historically had a dropout problem. Its location in the heart of coal-mining country, the relative isolation of the county, the low regard for education by many of the county residents, and until the last few years, the availability of jobs without a high school degree caused McDowell County to have the highest dropout rate in the state. In 1982, the school district initiated a program in the junior, senior high schools and in the fifth and sixth grades of all county schools. They have been successful in reducing the number of dropouts by some 20% but realize that more needs to be done especially with parents. Their parental involvement program consists of employing a guidance counselor to work with the parents of the fifth and sixth graders at the two county schools that produce the highest percentage of dropouts. This counselor follows up on all dropout prevention activities of the school with the parents, visting homes, holding parent meetings, increasing the awareness of parents to the detrimental effects of dropping out of school and providing support services for them if needed.

This paper has briefly described nine of the forty-six projects funded with Commission monies and is meant to show the wide range of activities that are occurring primarily dependent on local needs and resources. Included in this group are three projects where colleges have assumed the responsibility for project implementation. In Boone County, West Virginia the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies has undertaken a project at a local high school and is providing support services to the high school staff and community volunteers in its implementation. In Appalachian Virginia, two community colleges are assuming the responsibility of putting in place a coordinated, comprehensive dropout prevention/remediation plan for the local school districts in their service area. These plans have the support of the local superintendents and are intended to eliminate fragmentation, reduce duplication and lower operating costs of current individual efforts.

In addition to the individual projects, the Commission has funded five technical assistance grants.

A grant has been made to the Kentucky Education Television (KET) Network to utilize television combined with a local outreach effort for the purpose of creating awareness and action on dropout prevention in Kentucky. The television component will consist of a one-hour documentary providing information about the dropout problem in Kentucky, as well as showcasing exemplary dropout prevention programs located both in and out of the

state. The program will be broadcast in prime time in October, 1986 by KET and will be offered to any of the PBS stations in the region, reaching as large an audience as possible with extensive time-in advertising. In addition, it will be used on videocassette tape as the program focus for group meetings (PTA's, Civic Clubs, etc.) serving as a stimulus and springboard for discussion and involvement on the local level. In addition to the program, a 30-second public service announcement will be produced encouraging local involvement to increase high school retention rates.

Teleconferences are also being utilized. One was held in March and gave details about the television production and promotion plans and gave suggestions for organizing local task forces. A second teleconference will air in December, 1986 to evaluate the October program and its impact.

The KET technical assistance will also consist of promotion and outreach efforts. A promotion packet containing a brochure, sample press releases, and newspaper ads will be developed and distributed to participating PBS stations. The brochure will list existing exemplary dropout prevention programs and persons to contact for further information. A follow-up newsletter will be distributed to provide an on-going success-sharing motivational tool. A state task force will be formed including representatives from parent groups, civic groups, educators, student groups, government and business to help promote viewership of the one-hour documentary as well as to organize or support existing local dropout prevention programs.

Another technical assistance grant in Kentucky is enabling the Kentucky State Department of Education to add two staff members to their Unit of Dropout Prevention. These professionals will be field based, located in two strategic areas of Appalachian Kentucky.

Technical assistance is being provided by 70001 Training & Employment Institute to introduce the 70001 model to Appalachian schools for adoption as an in-school dropout prevention program. 70001 is a private nonprofit public service company, which since 1969 has served youth through a competency-based program of remedial education, pre-employment training and motivational activities. 70001 currently has more than 50 locations in 16 states. Their technical assistance also includes training Appalachian schools in techniques for securing JTPA and other resources for dropout programs and

educating local schools and community agencies on how to develop linkages with service agencies and the private sector.

A fourth technical assistance effort consists of providing presenters to interested school districts, or state departments of education for workshops on designing and implementing school dropout initiatives with an emphasis on no-cost, low-cost approaches.

The last technical assistance effort the Commission is involved in is the development of a comprehensive model curriculum to train teachers in dropout reduction. The curriculum, being developed by Appalachian State University (ASU) in Boone, North Carolina will be made available to school districts all over the Region, not only in North Carolina, once the model is completed by late spring. The Appalachian State University model curriculum will present teachers, guidance counselors and administrators with a wide range of methods that they can use to persuade students to stay in school. Among the materials being developed are, workshops and a training film. ASU will also be offering dropout prevention seminars throughout the Region.